

San Jacinto River Waste Pits Federal Superfund Site

Harris County

Background

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the lead agency for this site located east of the City of Houston consisting of a 20.6 acre tract of land composed of the remnants of three former on-site disposal pits which received wastes from paper mill activities in the 1960s. Disposal activities have ceased and portions of the three former on-site disposal pits are underwater in the San Jacinto River. The primary hazardous substances at the site are polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans. The TCEQ provides technical support to the EPA.

Potentially responsible parties (PRPs) include McGinnes Industrial Maintenance Corporation and International Paper Company, who are under an EPA Unilateral Order and an Administrative Order on Consent to fund and implement a Time Critical Removal Action, a Remedial Investigation, and a Feasibility Study. The Time Critical Removal Action was completed in July 2011 and stabilized the site by constructing a temporary armor cap to stop the release of contaminants into the San Jacinto River.

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has issued consumption advisories for all fish species and blue crabs, due to elevated levels of dioxin, organochlorine pesticides, and polychlorinated biphenyls in this section of the San Jacinto River.

Current Status

- A Draft Feasibility Study Report was received from the PRPs in September 2013 detailing potential long-term remedies for the site. Six remedies were presented, ranging from no further action but maintenance and monitoring of the cap to complete removal of site contamination to EPA action levels.
 - The preferred alternative presented by the PRPs is to modify and enhance the current cap in conjunction with institutional controls and long-term monitoring at an estimated cost of \$2.9 M. If this remedy were selected by EPA, the TCEQ has requested that the cap design be sealed by a Professional Engineer.
 - Complete removal of site contamination to EPA action levels was presented as an alternative at an estimated cost of \$104-\$636M. EPA has requested the PRPs to provide a more detailed cost analysis for this alternative.
- The EPA held an Open House and Community Awareness Meeting on January 30, 2014 at the Highlands Community Center to provide information and solicit public comments regarding the six remedial alternatives detailed in the Feasibility Study. Approximately 75 people attended.
- Once EPA selects a final remedy, they will draft a Record of Decision that outlines the remedy. Implementation of the remedy will follow.